DEPARTMENT OF
HIGHER EDUCATION &
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Central Region is comprised of 19 counties in the center of Missouri. This region is home to several cities, including Columbia, Mexico, Rolla, Camdenton, Lebanon, and the state capital, Jefferson City.

The Central Region workforce had more than 319,000 employees in 2023, making up 10.7 percent of Missouri's employment. In 2023, about 51.5 percent of the workforce was female, and 48.5 percent was male, while the Missouri average was 50.7 percent female and 49.3 percent male workers in the workforce. The regional average unemployment rate in 2023 was 2.9 percent, compared to 3.0 percent for Missouri and 3.6 percent for the nation.

The workforce is getting older in the Central Region, a trend continuing throughout Missouri and the U.S. In 2023, 23.1 percent of the workforce was age 55 or older, up from 19 percent a decade earlier. It was 23.6 percent for Missouri and 24 percent for the nation.

For the region, 11.9 percent of the workforce was non-white and 3.5 percent was Hispanic or Latino. This compares to the state averages of 17.5 percent non-white and 4.8 percent Hispanic or Latino.

In the Central Region, 6.3 percent of the region's population (ages 18 to 64) speaks a language other than English at home. By comparison, Missouri was at 7.0 percent and the U.S. was at 23.5 percent.

The Central Region has a slightly higher percentage of the population with a disability compared to the state and nation. For the Central Region, 13.7 percent of the population has a disability compared to 12.3 percent in Missouri and 10.5 percent in the U.S.
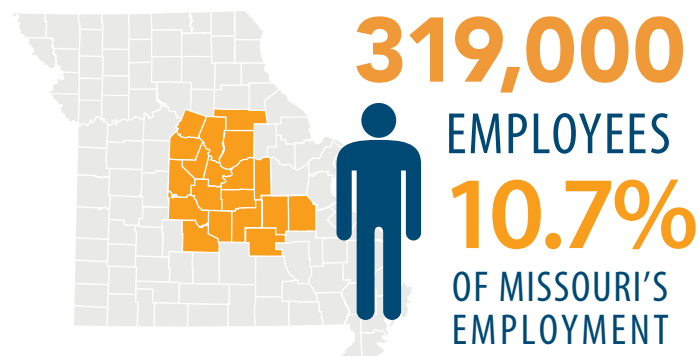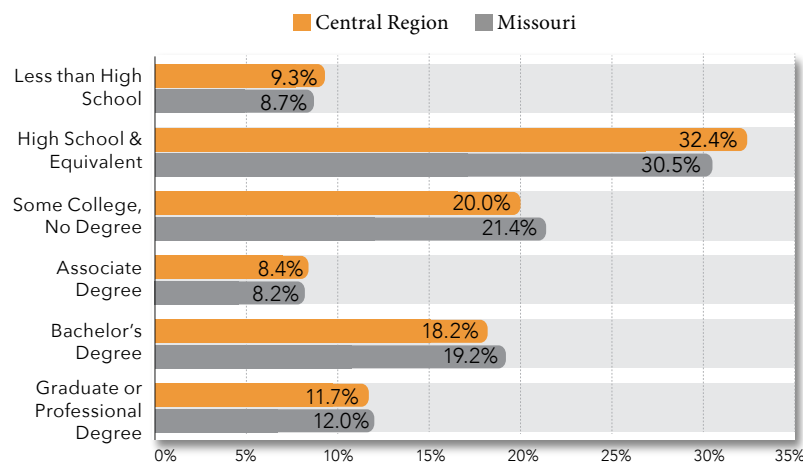
Workforce Demographics

	Central Region	Missouri	United States
Average Monthly Employment in 2023	319,356	2,993,587	161,037,000
Average Unemployment Rate in 2023	2.9%	3.0%	3.6%
Male	48.5%	49.3%	51.3%
Female	51.5%	50.7%	48.7%
Non-White	11.9%	17.5%	24.6%
Hispanic or Latino	3.5%	4.8%	17.7%
Ages 55 and Older	23.1%	23.6%	24.0%
With Disabilities (Ages 18-64)	13.7%	12.3%	10.5%
Below Poverty Levels (Ages 18-64)	15.4%	12.3%	11.7%
Language other than English (Ages 18-64)	6.3%	7.0%	23.5%
Education of Associate Degree or Higher (25 years & Older)	38.2%	39.4%	43.1%
Veterans (Age 18-64)	5.3%	4.7%	4.3%

SOURCES: QWI 2023 Q2; PRIVATE OWNERSHIP. CENSUS 2022 ACS 5 YEARS DATA, LAUS 2023 DATA

Educational attainment rates for the Central Region are slightly behind those of the state in regard to bachelor's or advanced degrees. About 38 percent of the region's population age 25 and older, has an associate, bachelor's, or advanced degree compared to 39 percent for the state and 43 percent for the nation. About 9.3 percent of the region's population age 25 and older had less than a high school education.

Educational Attainment

- Central Region
- Missouri

	Central Region	Missouri
Less than High School	9.3%	8.7%
High School & Equivalent	32.4%	30.5%
Some College, No Degree	20.0%	21.4%
Associate Degree	8.4%	8.2%
Bachelor's Degree	18.2%	19.2%
Graduate or Professional Degree	11.7%	12.0%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, ACS 2022, 5 YEAR ESTIMATES

319,000
EMPLOYEES
10.7%
OF MISSOURI'S EMPLOYMENT

CENTRAL REGION

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

The Central Region averaged more than 294,300 jobs in 2023. The region gained 1.6 percent more employment from 2022 to 2023. Missouri employment increased by 1.9 percent in 2023. From 2019 to 2023, the Central Region averaged 1.1 percent compound annual growth for an overall gain of 5.7 percent. During that same period (2019-2023), Missouri's compound annual employment gain was 0.5 percent for an overall gain of 2.4 percent.

Central Employment Annual Growth Rate

SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, QCEW
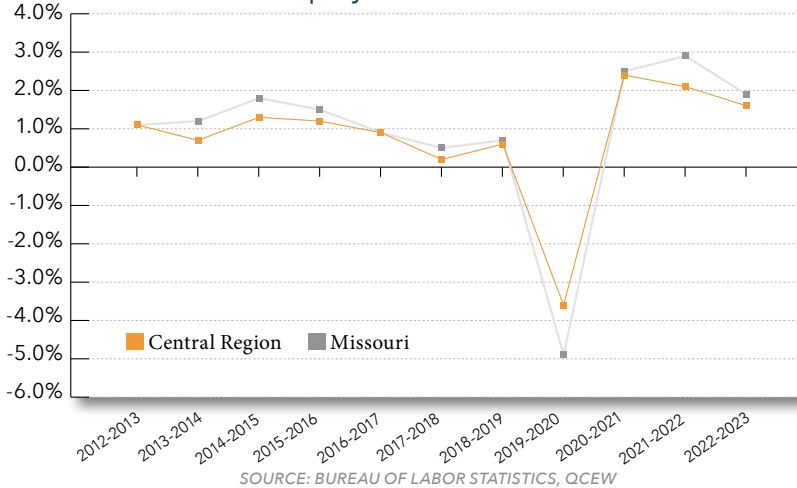
Health Care and Social Assistance was the largest industry sector in the Central Region, with over 46,200 jobs in 2023. The industry added 2,626 jobs at a compound annual growth rate of 1.2 percent since 2019. The *Retail Trade* industry continues to be one of the largest employing industries in the region with over 34,300 jobs in 2023, a gain of over 1,600 jobs since 2019.

Educational Services is another large industry with over 31,100 jobs in 2023, an increase of over 2,400 jobs since 2019. *Accommodation and Food Services* and *Manufacturing* are also among the largest industries in the region. *Accommodation and Food Services* gained over 1,500 jobs at a compound annual rate of 1.1 percent from 2019 to 2023. During the same period, *Manufacturing* added 172 jobs at a rate of 0.1 percent. *Public Administration* (-369); *Information* (-86); and *Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction* (-39) were the industry sectors that decreased in employment compared to 2019.

### Central Region Top Employing Industries

	Employment 2019	Employment 2023	Net Change	2019-2023 CAGR	2022 Annual Wages
Health Care and Social Assistance	43,589	46,215	2,626	1.2%	$58,344
Retail Trade	32,744	34,392	1,648	1.0%	$37,176
Educational Services	28,712	31,124	2,412	1.6%	$55,380
Accommodation and Food Services	29,130	30,707	1,577	1.1%	$23,328
Manufacturing	28,093	28,265	172	0.1%	$55,272
Public Administration	26,716	26,347	-369	-0.3%	$49,104
Construction	13,820	15,540	1,720	2.4%	$58,164
Finance and Insurance	10,448	12,693	2,245	4.0%	$72,432
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	11,083	11,745	662	1.2%	$43,392
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	8,756	9,819	1,063	2.3%	$67,092
Transportation and Warehousing	7,567	9,198	1,631	4.0%	$43,872
Wholesale Trade	8,416	8,515	99	0.2%	$69,828

SOURCE: LEHD QWI, 2019-2023 QUARTER 3 DATA, LEHD QWI 2022 ANNUAL AVERAGE FOR WAGE. ALL OWNERSHIP

LOCATION QUOTIENT

To understand the major industries within a region, an analysis of industry concentration or clustering can be useful. The Location Quotient (LQ) describes the concentration of an industry in a geographic region, in relation to the nation, with 1.0 being the national average. Industries with higher than 1.0 LQ indicate a concentration.

The Central Region has higher concentrations in *Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers; Credit Intermediation and Related Activities; Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Miscellaneous Retailers; General Merchandise Retailers;* and *Building Material and Garden Equipment and Suppliers.*
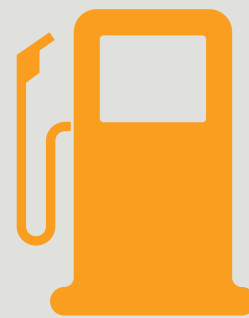
HIGHEST 2023
LQ 2.1
GASOLINE STATIONS AND FUEL DEALERS

2023 Central Region Location Quotients

Industry	Employment	Location Quotient
Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	4,114	2.1
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	8,118	1.6
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book, and Miscellaneous Retailers	4,622	1.6
General Merchandise Retailers	8,357	1.4
Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	3,608	1.4
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	5,114	1.3
Wood Product Manufacturing	1,005	1.3
Accommodation	4,401	1.2
Transit and Ground Passenger Transportation	952	1.2
Printing and Related Support Activities	803	1.1
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	897	1.1
Animal Production and Aquaculture	565	1.1
Food Services and Drinking Places	25,258	1.1
Machinery Manufacturing	2,228	1.0
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	6,059	1.0

SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, QUARTERLY CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES, 2023

CENTRAL REGION

Projected growth in industries helps to identify future employment needs for an area. Projections indicate that the largest industry growth in the Central Region between 2022-2032 will be in *Educational Services; Food Services and Drinking Places; Administrative and Support Services; Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals; Management of Companies and Enterprises;* and *Ambulatory Health Care Services.*

Central Region Largest Growth Industries 2022-2032

	Employment 2022	Employment 2032	Change 2022-2032 Numeric	Change 2022-2032 Percent
Educational Services	31,763	34,447	**2,684**	8.5%
Food Services and Drinking Places	25,231	27,023	**1,792**	7.1%
Administrative and Support Services	8,717	10,175	**1,458**	16.7%
Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	11,099	12,172	**1,073**	9.7%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	4,208	5,190	**982**	23.3%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	10,524	11,444	**920**	8.7%
Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	8,569	9,433	**864**	10.1%
Social Assistance	7,577	8,373	**796**	10.5%
Computer and Electronic Product Manufacturing	1,326	2,112	**786**	59.3%
Hospitals	16,104	16,850	**746**	0.0%

SOURCE: MERIC INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032

PROJECTED GROWTH BY INDUSTRY HELPS TO IDENTIFY FUTURE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS FOR AN AREA.

OCUPATIONS PROJECTIONS

MERIC produces occupational projections that estimates labor demand over a 10-year period. The current projections cycle projected industry and occupation employment from 2022-2032. MERIC categorizes these occupations using its Now-Next-Later method to help job seekers understand the training, education, and experience requirements for various occupations.

NOW jobs typically require short-term on-the-job training, little to no experience, and/or a high school diploma. **Now** occupations with the most projected annual openings are *Cashiers; Waiters and Waitresses;* and *Home Health and Personal Care Aides. Amusement and Recreation Attendants; Loan Interviewers and Clerks;* and *Tellers* are projected to be the fastest growing Now occupations over the next decade.

NEXT jobs typically require a non-degree certificate, associate degree, apprenticeship, some experience, or moderate- to long-term training. *Cooks, Restaurant; Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators;* and *Nursing Assistants* are projected to have the most openings for the **Next** category of occupations. *Logging Equipment Operators; Production Workers, All Other;* and *Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers* are projected to be the fastest growing Next occupations.

LATER jobs typically require a bachelor's degree or higher. For **Later** occupations, *General and Operations Managers; Registered Nurses;* and *Teaching Assistants, Postsecondary* are projected to have the most openings. *Loan Officers; Substitute Teachers, Short-Term;* and *Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education* are the fastest growing Later occupations.

Central Region Fastest Growing Occupations

NOW
Amusement and Recreation Atendants
Loan Interviewers and Clerks
Tellers
Packers and Packagers, Hand
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers

NEXT
Logging Equipment Operators
Production Workers, All Other
Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers
Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education

LATER
Loan Officers
Substitute Teachers, Short-Term
Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education

SOURCE: MERIC OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032

NOTE: OCCUPATIONS WITH ANNUAL TOTAL OPENINGS OF LESS THAN 50 ARE OMITTED

CENTRAL REGION

CENTRAL REGION LONG-TERM OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS BY TOP OPENINGS

OCCUPATION TITLE		2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Annual Growth Openings	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Total Openings	Median Wages
NOW OCCUPATIONS								
Cashiers		8,553	8,459	-9	818	824	**1,633**	$27,403
Waiters and Waitresses	⭐	5,078	5,451	37	453	636	**1,126**	$29,217
Home Health and Personal Care Aides	⭐	6,829	7,406	58	569	475	**1,102**	$28,891
Stockers and Order Fillers		6,079	6,231	15	383	603	**1,001**	$32,056
Retail Salespersons	⭐	6,689	6,546	-14	434	524	**944**	$30,053
NEXT OCCUPATIONS								
Cooks, Restaurant		3,480	3,731	25	246	294	**565**	$30,293
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators		4,791	4,966	18	207	308	**533**	$39,446
Nursing Assistants	⭐	3,377	3,591	21	220	273	**514**	$35,879
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	⭐	4,116	4,093	-2	186	240	**424**	$47,106
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers		2,503	2,667	16	130	248	**394**	$35,292
LATER OCCUPATIONS								
General and Operations Managers	⭐	9,517	9,705	19	239	516	**774**	$66,769
Registered Nurses	⭐	6,896	7,269	37	235	146	**418**	$73,759
Teaching Assistants, Postsecondary		2,204	2,392	19	131	136	**286**	$31,318
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education		3,631	3,939	31	127	124	**282**	$46,949
Managers, All Other		2,927	2,932	0	89	122	**211**	$80,993

SOURCE: MERIC OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS, 2022-2032   ⭐ *DENOTES OCCUPATIONS IN THE TOP TEN ONLINE JOB ADS FOR MAY 2023- APRIL 2024 IN THE REGION AND WITHIN THE NOW-NEXT-LATER CLASSIFICATION*

ONLINE JOB POSTINGS

Job postings are an indicator of demand and opportunities in an area and can assist individuals seeking job opportunities in current in-demand occupations. According to information based on online job posting data collected and aggregated from May 1, 2023 to April 30, 2024 by Lightcast™ for the Central Region, jobs like *Registered Nurses; Retail Salespersons;* and *First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers* topped the number of online job postings in the region.

OCCUPATION TITLE	ONLINE JOB POSTINGS
NOW OCCUPATIONS	
Retail Salespersons	2,280
Home Health & Personal Care Aides	1,590
Customer Service Representatives	1,230
Secretaries & Administrative Assistants	1,160
Janitors & Cleaners	890
NEXT OCCUPATIONS	
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	1,520
Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,500
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,350
Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing	820
Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	810
LATER OCCUPATIONS	
Registered Nurses	6,860
General & Operations Managers	970
Medical & Health Services Managers	920
Computer Occupations, All Other	790
Postsecondary Teachers	790

SOURCE: LIGHTCAST™, ONLINE JOB ADS FROM MAY 1, 2023 - APRIL 30, 2024